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TORREYA

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SCORES OF STATIONS FOR GAYLUSSACIA BRACHYCERA IN WEST VIRGINIA.*

BY FRED W. GRAY

One evening about the middle of June 1921, while eating supper at the home of Dr. George W. Van Stavern in Dorr, W. Va., the conversation turned to good things to eat. He asked if I had ever eaten "Juniper" pie. I had to confess complete ignorance as to what he meant, but when he had described it as a blue berry more acid than the common "huckleberry" on pretty green bushes, I suspected that it might be the box huckleberry, *Gaylussacia brachycera*. The next day I went down the road below his house and sure enough there it was beside the "public road." I gathered a few specimens and sent one to Mr. E. T. Wherry of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

In a few days I set to work by items in the local papers and by personal correspondence to try and determine the extent of the occurrence of *Gaylussacia brachycera* in this section. By August 8th about 75 different stations had been reported. This could never have been done without the common name "Juniper Berry." This is the only name I have been able to find for this plant, although other plants are also called "Junipers,"—e. g., *Vaccinium Pennsylvanicum* is called "Sweet Juniper" because the berries are sweeter and ripen about the same time as *G. brachycera*.

On August 8th Mr. Wherry arrived and we went over the territory together for five days. In all, at that time and before and since, I have visited about forty stations in three counties, Greenbrier, Monroe and Summers. I have reports of occurrences in Raleigh and Pocohontas Counties in West Virginia and in some of the bordering counties in Virginia.

*In the May, June 1921 issue of *Torreyia* (Vol. 21, page 53) is recorded a reference to the three known stations for the box huckleberry.

The territory in which it is found seems to correspond, at least in a general outline, to the mineral spring section of the Alleghanies. It is to be remembered that Michaux discovered it at "Warm Springs," Kin at "Kriem Prier," or something like that, meaning Greenbrier, four miles from White Sulphur Springs, and Pursh at Sweet Springs. I myself found it between the last two within 50 yards of an iron and alum spring. Many of the other stations are near mineral springs. Whether this has any real significance or not remains to be determined.

The patches occur most frequently along bluffs and near them on top. One reason for this is that in this section most of the sour or acid soil is found in such places, most of the land back from the bluffs along the streams and some on ridges and mountains is limestone. The patches most of them occur on northern or western exposures, I know of only three on southern exposures. This does not mean that it does not like sunshine, for Professor Sargent of the Arnold Arboretum says that it grows equally well in the sun, and I have seen just as thrifty plants growing at the edges of woods as in the shade. I think that the explanation is that the most favorable conditions for its seeding itself are found on northern and western exposures. All the seedlings that I have found were on such exposures, on shaded roadside banks, with either leaf mold or moss or the two mixed, and most plentifully where the banks were quite moist. The fact that seedlings are of slow growth makes it probable that in a southern exposure the soil would become so dry as to cause them to perish. I have seen seedlings five years old that had stems not over one fourth as large as an adult stem. Flat shady woods seem fairly well suited to self seeding as in one place on a flat topped ridge we found a number of distinct patches of different sizes. One patch bore albino berries the others the usual blue, this albino patch had very distinct outlines. Just over the hill from this is another albino patch that merges with other patches. There is also considerable variation between different patches in leaf size and shape. Some patches do not bear, or at least very little, and are called by the negroes "he junipers." We have not yet seen the plant with the enormous crops that they are said to bear, so do not know how much variation there may be in shape, size and color of the berries. Another season will add much to our knowledge of this interesting plant.